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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3458
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6794
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4523
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3145
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7667
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1743
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5078
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1284
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7409

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Asad Nomination/Referendum, Syria/Yemen, Syria/France,
Iraq, Palestinian Territories,
(5/14)

11. Summary: Syrian papers on May 14 reported President Asad's meeting on May 13 with the Speaker and selected members of the People's Assembly, who conveyed to the President the Assembly's approval of the nomination of the President for a new term of office and its selection of May 27th as the date for the popular referendum. They stressed that the referendum will be a national occasion to show the Syrian people's support for the President and his positions, which express the pulse of the street. In this connection, Syrian papers published a number of articles praising President Asad's policies and noting Syria's accomplishments under his rule.

Papers also reported President Asad's meeting on May 13 with Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qurbi, who conveyed a message from Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on the latest developments in the region, bilateral relations, and the role that Yemen can play alongside Syria in enhancing security and stability and achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region in accordance with the Arab peace initiative. FM al-Qurbi underscored the significance of continued coordination and consultation between Syria and Yemen to serve the interests of the two countries and peoples and help boost joint Arab action. Al-Qurbi also met with VP Shara and FM Mouallem.

Government-owned Al-Thawra carried a statement by Lucien Bitterlin, Chairman of the Arab-French Friendship Association, that "Syria is the key to peace in the region". Bitterlin expressed solidarity and support for Syrian efforts under the leadership of President Asad to achieve stability and security in the region.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad receives the People's Assembly's approval of the nomination of President Asad for a new term of office"
(Government-owned Tishreen, 5/13)

"The Syrian people look forward to May 27th to exercise a constitutional right and a national duty through the referendum for a second constitutional term for President Asad. The National

Progressive Front: The referendum means continuing on the path of steadfastness, development, and national dignity" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"President Asad receives a message from Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on latest regional developments and bilateral relations" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"Lucien Bitterlin, Chairman of the Arab-French Friendship Association: Syria is a pivotal country in the region" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/14)

"President Mubarak: No Arab leader dares to make a concession on the Palestinian right of return in the Arab Peace Initiative" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"Failure of the security Plan in the Gaza Strip. Four Palestinians killed in intra-Palestinian clashes" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/14)

"US military enforcements to Diyala. 250 Iraqis victimized by two explosions in Baghdad and northern Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/14)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Secrets of Syria's Power"

Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/14): "Many in the region and beyond thought that the vicious

campaign of pressure and threats against Syria, in which some Arab forces participated and to which they devoted funds and other means, would end with tragic consequences for the country....

"But Syria stood fast in the face of the storm, and events and developments proved that its policy was right and its role was pivotal. Moreover, Syria is being counted on regionally and internationally to spare the peoples of the region the repercussions of what the advocates of wars and chaos did that jeopardized security and stability of the world

"The secret of Syria's power lies in the fact that it never bargained over any of its rights and never accepted the language of orders and pressure.

"Syria's power also lies in its dependence on itself and its potentials, which increase day after day through the efforts of its sons, despite the surrounding political circumstances, and under the leadership of President Asad, who guides, follows up, and encourages reform projects on all levels...."

"Arabs and Losing Bets"

Muhi Eddin Mohamed, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/14): "The political winds in the US, France and the UK do not do Arabs any good, even though the new leaders sympathize with Arabs. Arabs must sympathize with each other and must defend their interests, rights, wealth and territories if they are really concerned about living as dignified people, not as satellites....

"We have had enough bets on changing leaders and politicians all over the world. So far we have not reaped anything, because of the absence of joint Arab action on the political, military and economic levels.... In order to confront future challenges, Arabs must learn the lesson of Syria's insistence on its rights, its persistence in national and pan-Arab principles, and its rejection of bargaining on its national and regional security. Syria has succeeded in confronting fierce storms and in foiling US pressure by controlling

the recklessness of extremists and neoconservatives, even if only partially. Syria has also succeeded in changing world public opinion toward Arab causes. Will Arabs learn from the lessons of history...?"

Corbin